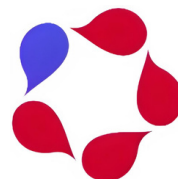


2024

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

Iraq

Prepared By:



Washington Center
For Human Rights

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Executive Summary

In 2024, Iraq's human rights landscape is marked by significant challenges, with ongoing violations and some progress. Violence against protesters remains a critical issue, as security forces continue to use excessive force, resulting in injuries and fatalities, particularly among those opposing government corruption and demanding better public services. Freedom of expression is also under threat, with the government implementing measures targeting online content deemed "indecent," raising concerns about censorship and the suppression of free speech. Journalists and activists face intimidation, harassment, and arrest for reporting on sensitive issues, particularly related to protests and government accountability. Discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals persists, with proposed amendments to legislation that would impose severe penalties for consensual same-sex relations, drawing international condemnation. Child rights remain a concern as child marriage rates continue to rise, exacerbated by poverty and insecurity. Although a draft child protection law was introduced, its passage remains uncertain, leaving many children vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Despite these challenges, there has been some progress, such as the government's steps toward implementing the Yazidi Survivors Law and developing a Civilian Protection Policy, indicating a commitment to addressing past injustices and improving human rights protections. The Kurdistan Regional Government has also reported progress under its five-year human rights plan, showcasing some positive developments in the region. Additionally, the approval of a substantial multi-year budget aims to address economic issues, which could indirectly benefit human rights by improving public services and infrastructure. However, ongoing concerns remain, including political infighting that hinders the passage of crucial laws to enhance rights protections, particularly related to child protection and domestic violence. The lack of accountability for security forces involved in human rights abuses is a critical issue, with many victims of state violence still seeking justice. Many displaced individuals continue to struggle to obtain essential civil documents, limiting their access to public services and exacerbating vulnerabilities, especially for women and children. Recommendations for improving Iraq's human rights situation include strengthening legal protections for vulnerable populations, enhancing accountability mechanisms for security forces, increasing international monitoring of human rights conditions, supporting civil society organisations, and advocating for policy changes to empower marginalised communities. Despite the precarious human rights situation, concerted efforts from the government, the international community, and civil society are essential to fostering a more just and equitable society in Iraq.

Methodology

The methodology used in collecting data for the human rights report on Iraq typically involves a comprehensive approach that integrates various sources and methods. This ensures a robust understanding of the human rights landscape in the country.

Sources of Information

1. Interviews:

Interviews with victims, witnesses, and local activists play a crucial role in gathering firsthand accounts of human rights abuses. Researchers conduct interviews with a diverse demographic to capture a broad spectrum of experiences[1].

2. Field Research:

Field investigations are a key component, where researchers visit locations where human rights violations have occurred. This includes gathering physical evidence, such as photographs of injuries or documentation of destruction, and using forensic tools to substantiate claims[1].

3. Reports from NGOs and Local Activist:

Collaboration with local civil society organisations, NGOs, and activists is essential. These entities provide valuable insights and data that help contextualise the findings. Reports from these organisations often serve as a foundation for understanding the local human rights situation[2][4].

4. Official Documents and Data:

Analysing official documents, including government reports, legal texts, and international law, is critical for corroborating findings. This also includes reviewing data from international bodies like the UN to track patterns of abuse[1][4].

5. Media Reports:

Continuous monitoring of local and international media is essential for staying updated on ongoing human rights issues. This helps researchers identify emerging trends and incidents that require further investigation[1].

Data Collection Methods

1. Qualitative Methods:

The primary method of data collection is qualitative, focusing on in-depth interviews and field observations. This approach allows researchers to capture the nuances of individual experiences and the broader socio-political context[3].

2. Quantitative Methods:

While qualitative data is predominant, quantitative methods may also be employed to gather statistical information about the prevalence of specific abuses, such as gender-based violence or arbitrary detentions. This helps in generalising findings to a larger population[3].

3. Remote Interviews:

Due to security concerns, especially in conflict zones like Iraq, many interviews are conducted remotely via phone or online platforms. This method, while necessary, can introduce challenges related to scheduling, language barriers, and the reliability of participants' responses[2].

Limitations and Challenges

1. Security Concerns:

The volatile security situation in Iraq poses significant risks for both researchers and interviewees. Many potential participants may be unwilling to share their experiences due to fear of reprisal, leading to potential biases in the data collected[2].

2. Access to Information:

Researchers often face challenges in accessing reliable data from government sources, which can limit the comprehensiveness of the report. The lack of transparency and bureaucratic restrictions can hinder effective data collection[2][4].

3. Language Barriers:

Interviews are frequently conducted in Arabic or Kurdish, which necessitates the use of translators. This can complicate the data collection process and may affect the accuracy of the information gathered[2].

4. Selection Bias:

There is a risk of selection bias in the interview process, as those who are willing to speak may not represent the broader population. Efforts are made to include participants from diverse backgrounds, but logistical and security issues can limit this[2][3].

In summary, the methodology for collecting data on human rights in Iraq is multifaceted, relying heavily on qualitative research, collaboration with local entities, and a careful analysis of various data sources. However, researchers must navigate significant challenges,

including security risks and access to reliable information, which can impact the overall findings.

Citations:

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Human Rights Overview

In 2024, Iraq's human rights landscape remained deeply troubled, reflecting the country's enduring political instability, economic hardship, and social challenges. Despite years of international aid and domestic efforts, Iraq continued to struggle with severe issues, including widespread displacement, systemic violations of children's rights, suppression of freedom of expression, and the escalating impacts of climate change. These issues underscore the Iraqi government's ongoing failure to protect its citizens and uphold basic human rights standards, raising serious questions about the country's future[1][2][3].

Political Context

The December 2023 provincial elections, marred by a dismally low voter turnout of 41%, revealed the Iraqi public's deep-seated disillusionment with their government. The lack of faith in the authorities, coupled with the persistent violence and insecurity stemming from factional conflicts and threats from groups like the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), painted a bleak picture of Iraq's political landscape. The government's inability to establish stability or foster public trust has exacerbated human rights abuses, leaving many citizens vulnerable and disenfranchised[3].

Economic Situation

Iraq's economy, overwhelmingly reliant on oil revenues—constituting over 90% of its total income—remains a glaring example of the government's short-sighted economic policies. Despite the immense wealth generated from oil, there has been little to no progress in diversifying the economy or addressing the dire needs of marginalized communities. The government's failure to implement sustainable economic reforms has perpetuated inequality and poverty, while the worsening climate crisis, marked by severe droughts and desertification, threatens the livelihoods of millions[3].

Social Issues

The human rights situation in Iraq is further compounded by several critical social issues:

Civil Documentation

An alarming number of Iraqis—up to 1 million—remain displaced and unable to obtain essential civil documentation, such as birth, marriage, and death certificates, as well as national identification cards[1][2]. This bureaucratic failure has left many without access to basic public services and restricted their freedom of movement, effectively rendering them invisible in their own country. The government's negligence in resolving this crisis is a stark violation of fundamental human rights and underscores the systemic dysfunction within the state apparatus[1][2].

Children's Rights

The introduction of a draft child protection law in 2023 has done little to curb the rampant issue of child marriage in Iraq, where 25.5% of married women were wed before the age of 18[2]. The persistence of child marriage, driven by poverty, insecurity, and limited educational opportunities for girls, highlights the Iraqi government's failure to protect its most vulnerable citizens. This issue not only violates children's rights but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and gender inequality[2].

Freedom of Expression

The Iraqi government's crackdown on "indecent content" online, leading to the imprisonment of several individuals, is a glaring example of the state's disregard for freedom of expression[2]. Vaguely worded laws have been weaponized to silence journalists, activists, and political opponents, reflecting a broader trend of authoritarianism. This suppression of dissent stifles democratic discourse and undermines the very foundations of a free and just society[2].

Climate Change and Environmental Degradation

Iraq's vulnerability to climate change, as the fifth most susceptible country globally, is a looming human rights catastrophe[2]. The government's inadequate response to the environmental crisis—marked by worsening droughts, desertification, and pollution—threatens to displace millions more and devastate the nation's agricultural base. Activists who have sounded the alarm on these issues have faced harassment, intimidation, and even threats to their lives, further highlighting the dangerous intersection of environmental degradation and human rights abuses in Iraq[2][3].

In conclusion, the human rights situation in Iraq in 2024 reflects a deeply fractured society, where political incompetence, economic mismanagement, and social neglect have created a perfect storm of suffering and injustice. The Iraqi government must urgently address these critical issues, or risk further entrenching the systemic abuses that have plagued the nation for decades.

Citations:

[1] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024>

[2] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/iraq>

[3]

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/iraq/report-iraq/>

Civil and Political Rights

The civil and political rights situation in Iraq during 2024 was characterized by significant challenges, particularly concerning freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, arbitrary arrests, and instances of torture or ill-treatment. The government's response to dissent and civil liberties issues has been marked by repression, impacting the overall rights landscape for the Iraqi population.

Freedom of Expression

In 2024, the Iraqi government intensified its crackdown on freedom of expression. A campaign targeting "indecent content" online was launched, leading to the prosecution of individuals for expressing dissenting views or sharing content deemed inappropriate by authorities. This campaign was supported by vaguely worded laws, such as Article 403 of the Iraqi penal code, which criminalises material that allegedly violates public decency. Reports indicated that over 96,000 complaints were filed against social media content, resulting in several arrests and imprisonments of activists and journalists[1][2].

Freedom of Assembly

The right to peaceful assembly faced significant restrictions, particularly in the context of protests. In October 2023, mass protests were organised in response to the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, with political factions calling for demonstrations. However, these protests were often met with heavy-handed responses from security forces, leading to instances of violence and intimidation against participants. The government's approach to managing dissent has included the use of force to disperse gatherings, contributing to a climate of fear surrounding public demonstrations[1].

Arbitrary Arrests and Torture

Arbitrary arrests remained a pervasive issue in Iraq, with security forces often detaining individuals based on their perceived political affiliations or dissenting views. Reports indicated that security and intelligence forces engaged in practices such as blacklisting families associated with groups like the Islamic State, preventing them from accessing essential civil documentation. This practice left many vulnerable to arrest at checkpoints and subjected to further discrimination[1][2].

Instances of torture and ill-treatment in detention facilities were also reported. In one notable case, an environmental activist was abducted and tortured by unidentified armed groups, highlighting the risks faced by those who speak out against government policies or environmental degradation. Despite the severity of these incidents, there were few investigations or accountability measures taken against perpetrators, allowing a culture of impunity to persist[1][2].

Government Responses and Impact on the Population

The Iraqi government's responses to civil and political rights issues have primarily focused on maintaining control rather than addressing the underlying grievances of the population. The repression of dissent has stifled public discourse and created an atmosphere of fear, discouraging citizens from exercising their rights to free expression and assembly. This has led to widespread disillusionment with political processes, as evidenced by low voter turnout in recent elections, where only 41% of eligible voters participated[1][2].

The overall impact on the population has been profound, with many Iraqis feeling marginalised and voiceless in a political system that appears unresponsive to their needs. The combination of economic struggles, political instability, and human rights abuses has contributed to a sense of hopelessness among citizens, particularly the youth, who have been at the forefront of recent protests demanding reform and accountability[2][3].

In summary, the civil and political rights situation in Iraq during 2024 was marked by repression of freedoms, arbitrary arrests, and instances of torture, all of which contributed to a challenging environment for civic engagement and human rights advocacy. The government's heavy-handed approach to dissent has left many Iraqis feeling disenfranchised and vulnerable.

Citations:

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- [2] [Human Rights Watch](<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/iraq>)
- [3] [Forbes](<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2024/08/17/the-rights-of-women-and-girls-in-iraq-on-a-downward-spiral/>)

Rights of Specific Groups

Women's Rights in Iraq

Women in Iraq continue to face significant challenges in exercising their human rights. Despite some progress, such as the introduction of a draft child protection law in 2023, women and girls remain vulnerable to gender-based violence, with limited access to protection and support services. Poverty, insecurity, and lower educational outcomes have contributed to increasing rates of child marriage, with 25.5% of women married before age 18 and 5.2% married before 15 according to a 2021 study[4]. Discriminatory laws and social norms continue to restrict women's rights, particularly in areas of personal status, inheritance, and divorce[4].

Children's Rights

The situation for children's rights in Iraq is mixed. While the introduction of a draft child protection law in 2023 was a positive step, issues such as child labor, exploitation, and abuse remain prevalent. Children born of unregistered marriages or born out of wedlock, including those born of rape, may be unable to obtain birth certificates and access government services and social protection[4]. The lack of access to education, particularly for children in conflict-affected areas, has exacerbated vulnerabilities, with many children forced into labor or early marriage[4].

LGBTQ+ Rights

The rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in Iraq have faced increasing threats in 2023. A bill was introduced in parliament that would impose the death penalty or life in prison for same-sex conduct and imprisonment for transgender expression[4]. The Kurdistan Regional Government also ordered the closure of a human rights organization over its activities related to homosexuality[4]. LGBTQ+ people continue to face violence, abductions, torture, and sexual violence by armed groups, with impunity for the perpetrators. Social stigma and discrimination are pervasive, leading to a culture of silence and fear among LGBTQ+ individuals[4].

Ethnic and Religious Minorities

Ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq, such as Christians, Yazidis, and Shabaks, have faced devastating impacts from the ongoing conflict. In 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues expressed grave concerns about the physical safety of these groups, who were being persecuted on the grounds of their religion and ethnicity[1]. Minorities have been subjected to abductions, killings, property confiscation, and forced conversions by extremist groups. While some efforts have been made to protect these communities, such as the establishment of safe zones, the overall situation remains precarious[1][2].

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities in Iraq face widespread discrimination and lack of legal protections. The definition of disabled persons under Iraqi law takes a care-based approach rather than a rights-based approach, which is not in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[3]. Women with disabilities face compounding discrimination on the basis of gender and disability, with limited access to work and education opportunities. Infrastructure and public services are often inaccessible, further marginalizing individuals with disabilities[3].

In conclusion, while there have been some positive developments, such as the draft child protection law, the human rights situation in Iraq remains dire for many vulnerable groups. Women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic and religious minorities, and persons with disabilities continue to face significant challenges in exercising their fundamental rights and accessing justice and protection.

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- [5] [Amnesty International](<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/iraq/report-iraq/>)
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- [7] [U.S. Department of State](<https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/iraq/>)

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

Right to Health

Iraq continues to face significant challenges in ensuring the right to health for its citizens. The healthcare system remains underfunded and overburdened, with shortages of medical supplies, equipment, and qualified personnel. Access to healthcare is particularly limited in rural areas and conflict-affected regions. Preventable diseases like cholera have re-emerged due to poor water and sanitation infrastructure, with outbreaks reported across the country in 2023 that resulted in over 1,300 cases and at least seven deaths by mid-November[2].

The COVID-19 pandemic has further strained the healthcare system, with Iraq reporting over 2 million cases and 25,000 deaths as of early 2024. Vaccination rates remain low, with only about 30% of the population fully vaccinated. Mental health services are scarce, with limited access to treatment and support for those affected by the trauma of conflict and displacement[1].

Right to Education

Iraq has made some progress in improving access to education, but significant challenges remain. School enrollment rates have increased, particularly for girls, but high dropout rates persist. Shortages of school buildings, qualified teachers, and teaching materials hinder educational quality[3].

The Iraqi government has taken steps to address these issues, including launching a national committee to enhance enrollment and reduce dropouts, and increasing the education budget to address infrastructure gaps. However, conflict, displacement, and poverty continue to prevent many children from accessing education. Children born of unregistered marriages or out of wedlock may be unable to obtain birth certificates, limiting their access to school enrollment[1].

Right to Adequate Housing

Housing remains a critical issue in Iraq, with many people living in substandard conditions or lacking access to basic services like water and electricity. The conflict with ISIS has left hundreds of thousands of homes damaged or destroyed, particularly in areas like Mosul and Anbar. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) face particular challenges in accessing adequate housing, with many living in camps or informal settlements with limited services and security[2].

The Iraqi government has made some efforts to address the housing crisis, including launching reconstruction projects and providing financial assistance to those affected by conflict. However, progress has been slow, and many IDPs remain unable to return to their areas of origin due to ongoing security concerns, lack of services, and unresolved property disputes[1][2].

In conclusion, while Iraq has taken some positive steps to address economic, social, and cultural rights, significant challenges remain. Access to healthcare, education, and adequate housing continues to be limited, particularly for vulnerable groups like IDPs, women, and children. Ongoing conflict, displacement, and the impacts of climate change have exacerbated these challenges, underscoring the need for sustained investment and reform to ensure the realisation of these fundamental rights for all Iraqis.

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Refugees and Migrants

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

In 2024, Iraq hosted approximately 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers, predominantly from Syria, with a significant majority (over 90%) living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) [2][4]. The Syrian refugees, primarily Kurdish, face ongoing insecurity and limited prospects for return due to the volatile situation in Syria. A survey by the UNHCR reveals that 94% of Syrian refugees in Iraq do not plan to return soon, citing safety concerns and a lack of livelihood opportunities as primary reasons [2].

Living conditions for these refugees are often challenging. While some have access to essential services, many live in urban settings where they struggle with employment and housing. The UNHCR is working on integrating refugees into social protection schemes and improving their access to national services and job opportunities [1][2].

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Iraq has around 1.14 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of early 2024. The closure of camps, including the last operational camp in Ninewa in April 2023, has placed many families at risk of secondary displacement without adequate reintegration support [3][5]. IDPs frequently lack civil documentation, which is crucial for accessing public services. Additionally, many face obstacles to return due to perceived affiliations with extremist groups, particularly among Sunni Arabs [4][5].

The UNHCR is transitioning from emergency response to a development-focused approach, aiming to provide durable solutions such as safe return or local integration [1][2]. Despite these efforts, many IDPs report inadequate access to public services, including education and healthcare, exacerbating their vulnerability [4].

Migrant Workers

Migrant workers in Iraq, especially those from neighbouring countries, often endure exploitation and abuse. Reports indicate that these workers face poor working conditions, lack of legal protections, and limited access to justice. Common issues include wage theft, unsafe working environments, and discrimination [3]. The legal framework for protecting migrant workers' rights in Iraq remains insufficient, which exacerbates their vulnerability.

International and Domestic Responses

The international community, led by organisations such as UNHCR, is actively addressing the needs of refugees and IDPs in Iraq. UNHCR's initiatives focus on enhancing protection environments, supporting access to civil documentation, and advocating for policy reforms to

improve social services [1][2]. Efforts are also made to empower displaced populations and host communities to reduce protection risks and increase resilience [1].

However, significant challenges remain due to the Iraqi government's limited capacity to implement effective policies and provide adequate services. Political instability and security concerns continue to impede progress in addressing the needs of these vulnerable groups [5].

Conclusion

While efforts are being made to improve conditions for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in Iraq, substantial challenges persist. Comprehensive legal protections, improved living conditions, and enhanced access to services are critical to ensuring the rights and dignity of these groups in 2024.

Citations

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Legal Framework and Accountability

Legal Framework and Reforms

Iraq's legal framework for human rights is fundamentally anchored in its 2005 Constitution, which contains provisions intended to safeguard human rights. Recent amendments and legislative efforts in 2024 aim to enhance these protections, including proposals to amend the Constitution to eliminate tribal customs that may infringe upon individual rights and to reinforce the state's commitment to rehabilitative justice[3].

In 2024, Iraq introduced several new laws aimed at aligning its human rights framework with international standards. However, these laws face implementation challenges due to ongoing political instability, sectarian divisions, and corruption[1][5]. While the legislative changes represent a step forward, their effectiveness is often undermined by these persistent issues.

Role of the Judiciary

The Iraqi judiciary has historically struggled with issues of independence and effectiveness. Under Saddam Hussein's regime, the judiciary was heavily politicized, which compromised its ability to uphold human rights[1]. Although recent reforms have aimed at enhancing judicial independence, the judiciary continues to grapple with corruption and a lack of resources. The United Nations has highlighted the need for a more robust and independent judicial system to ensure accountability for human rights violations[2].

Impunity for Human Rights Violations

Impunity for human rights violations remains a significant problem in Iraq. Many perpetrators of violations, such as torture and extrajudicial killings, have not been held accountable due to political interference, fear of retaliation, and the influence of armed groups[5]. This lack of accountability undermines efforts to address and prevent human rights abuses.

Notable Cases

1. Case of the 2014 Sinjar Massacre:

ISIS militants perpetrated a massacre against the Yazidi community in Sinjar, resulting in thousands of deaths. Although some perpetrators have been captured and prosecuted, many remain at large, and the judicial response has been criticised for its sluggishness and ineffectiveness[5].

2. Assassination of Activists:

The killing of human rights activists, such as Hisham al-Hashimi in 2020, highlights the broader issue of impunity. Investigations into such killings often fail to produce results, reflecting systemic problems in addressing violence against civil society[5].

3. Torture Cases:

Reports of torture within detention facilities persist, but convictions of those responsible are rare. This indicates a systemic failure to effectively address and rectify human rights abuses within the security apparatus[4].

Conclusion

While Iraq's legal framework for human rights has seen some positive developments in 2024, challenges remain. The judiciary's effectiveness is compromised by corruption and political influence, and impunity for human rights violations continues to be a critical issue. Ongoing international support and pressure are crucial for improving accountability and upholding human rights in Iraq.

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- [8] <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8035d0e5274a2e87db87fa/human-rights-06.pdf>

International Relations and Human Rights

In 2024, Iraq's international relations were significantly influenced by its engagement with UN bodies and other international organisations regarding human rights. The country's domestic human rights situation and the international response to it played a crucial role in shaping its external relations.

Engagement with UN Bodies

Iraq's interaction with the United Nations (UN) was pivotal in its international relations. The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) continued to support Iraq's peace and security efforts, although an independent strategic review recommended a streamlined mandate to address emerging threats, including state fragility, armed actors, and the risk of terrorist resurgences[2]. The UN Security Council extended UNAMI's mandate in May 2024, with a focus on economic reform, service delivery, sustainable development, and climate change, as Iraq's representative requested a conclusion of UNAMI's work by December 2025[3].

International Pressure and Sanctions

Iraq faced significant international pressure concerning its human rights practices. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights raised concerns over proposed legislation that would impose severe penalties for same-sex relations. The Iraqi parliament delayed voting on these amendments amidst internal disagreements[2]. Additionally, Amnesty International highlighted the lack of accountability for security forces and militias involved in the violent crackdown on 2019 protests, and ongoing issues with enforced disappearances[5].

Impact on Domestic Human Rights Situation

The impact of international scrutiny on Iraq's domestic human rights situation was mixed. While there were efforts such as the implementation of the Yazidi Survivors Law and the enactment of a Civilian Protection Policy, political infighting stalled key legislation needed for further human rights protections, such as laws on child protection and domestic violence[4]. Furthermore, Iraq grappled with severe climate challenges, ranking as the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, facing issues like droughts, desertification, and increased sandstorms. These environmental problems exacerbated the country's human rights situation by affecting living conditions and exacerbating vulnerabilities[4].

In summary, Iraq's international relations in 2024 were marked by active engagement with UN bodies and faced significant international pressure over human rights issues. This external scrutiny had a notable impact on the country's human rights situation, influencing both legislative developments and responses to environmental challenges.

Citations:

- [1] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024>
- [2] <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-05/iraq-23.php>
- [3] <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15698.doc.htm>
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- [5] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/iraq/report-iraq/>
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- [7] <https://www.state.gov/g7-italy-2024-foreign-ministers-statement-on-addressing-global-challenges-fostering-partnerships/>
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Recommendations

Here are specific recommendations to improve the human rights situation in Iraq based on recent findings. These are directed towards the Iraqi government, international bodies, and civil society organisations, focusing on actionable steps to address identified human rights violations:

Recommendations to the Iraqi Government

1. Strengthen Legal Frameworks:

- Amend or repeal laws that restrict freedom of expression, assembly, and association, ensuring they comply with international human rights standards. This includes revising or abolishing laws that criminalise dissent and restrict civic space.

2. Enhance Accountability Mechanisms:

- Create independent bodies to thoroughly investigate and address allegations of human rights abuses by state actors, including security forces. Ensure these bodies have the authority and resources to operate effectively and implement protective measures for whistleblowers and victims.

3. Promote Civil Society Engagement:

- Create a supportive environment for civil society organisations by easing registration processes and providing financial support for human rights initiatives. Prevent any form of intimidation or harassment against NGOs.

4. Regular Reporting and Transparency:

- Implement a policy of regular reporting on human rights issues to the Iraqi Parliament and the public. The Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) should publish annual human rights assessments to promote transparency and accountability.

5. Support for Vulnerable Groups:

- Develop targeted programs to assist marginalised communities, including women, ethnic and religious minorities, and persons with disabilities. Focus on improving access to education, healthcare, and legal services for these groups.

Recommendations to International Bodies

1. Increase Monitoring and Reporting:

- Enhance monitoring efforts by international organisations, such as the UN and human rights NGOs, to assess and report on human rights conditions in Iraq. Ensure these assessments are comprehensive and publicly accessible.

2. Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:

- Provide technical assistance to Iraqi institutions to build their capacity to uphold human rights. This could include training programs for law enforcement and judiciary personnel on human rights standards and practices.

3. Support for Civil Society:

- Prioritise funding and support for Iraqi civil society organisations engaged in human rights advocacy and legal aid. Strengthening these organisations will enable them to better hold the government accountable and promote human rights.

4. Facilitate Dialogue:

- Promote dialogue between the Iraqi government and civil society organizations to collaboratively address human rights issues. Establish regular consultation platforms to facilitate this engagement.

Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations

1. Capacity Building Initiatives:

- Invest in building the advocacy and operational capacities of local NGOs. Provide training on legal rights, advocacy strategies, and effective engagement with governmental processes to enhance their impact.

2. Coalition Building:

- Form coalitions among various civil society groups to create a unified approach on critical human rights issues. This can strengthen their collective voice and influence in policy discussions.

3. Public Awareness Campaigns:

- Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate the public about human rights issues and the importance of civic engagement. Mobilising community support is crucial for fostering a culture of accountability and respect for human rights.

4. Documentation and Reporting:

- Systematically document human rights abuses and engage in reporting to international bodies. This documentation is vital for accountability efforts and helps maintain global attention on Iraq's human rights situation.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work together to address ongoing human rights violations in Iraq and promote a more just and equitable society.

Conclusion

The 2024 human rights report on Iraq highlights a nation facing a mix of progress and ongoing challenges. Despite a period of relative stability since the 2003 invasion, serious human rights issues persist and require urgent attention.

Although Iraq has seen improvements in governance and stability, persistent problems such as corruption, high unemployment, and inadequate public services continue to fuel public discontent. This unrest often results in violent responses from security forces, undermining efforts to address grievances peacefully.

Freedom of expression remains under threat, with laws increasingly used to silence journalists and activists. Government efforts to control online content further restrict public discourse, limiting the space for dissent and critical discussion.

Approximately 1.1 million Iraqis remain internally displaced, struggling with inadequate access to basic rights and services. The closure of displacement camps without sufficient resettlement plans has worsened their plight, particularly for those with suspected ties to ISIS.

Women and girls face systemic discrimination and violence, with stalled legal protections against domestic violence and rising rates of child marriage. The legal system often fails to hold perpetrators accountable, perpetuating a cycle of abuse.

Reports of torture and mistreatment in detention facilities persist, with inadequate safeguards and accountability for those involved in these abuses. The lack of effective legal oversight remains a critical concern.

Additionally, Iraq is grappling with severe environmental challenges exacerbated by climate change, affecting public health and livelihoods. Environmental activists face harassment and intimidation, highlighting the intersection of environmental and human rights issues.

In conclusion, while Iraq has made some strides towards stability, addressing these critical human rights issues is imperative. Ongoing international monitoring and engagement are essential to ensure the protection of human rights and hold the government accountable. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the well-being of Iraqi citizens and for the broader stability of the region. The international community must continue to advocate for meaningful reforms to uphold human dignity and security for all Iraqis.

Appendices

Appendix A: Statistical Data on Human Rights Issues

1. Summary Statistics:

Violence Against Civilians:

- **2023:** 537 civilian deaths, a 27% decrease from 2022 and 20% decrease from 2021.
- **Early 2024:** 119 civilian deaths in the first three months.

Breakdown of Casualties (Feb 2023 - Mar 2024):

- **Incidents:** 95 incidents with 188 civilian casualties.
- **Fatalities:** 78 killed, 110 injured.
 - **Women:** 7 killed, 12 injured.
 - **Men:** 44 killed, 60 injured.
 - **Children:** 27 killed (22 boys, 5 girls), 36 injured (31 boys, 5 girls).

Types of Violence:

- Predominant causes include IEDs, suicide bombings, airstrikes, small arms fire, and executions.

Detentions and Arbitrary Arrests:

Scale of the Problem:

The exact number of arbitrary detentions in Iraq is unclear due to limited access and reporting, but it is known to be widespread and persistent.

Demographic Breakdown:

Arbitrary detentions have impacted a diverse group of individuals, including:

- Adults (men and women)
- Children
- Political activists
- Journalists
- Suspected insurgents
- Civilians caught in security operations

Key Perpetrators:

Those implicated in arbitrary detentions include:

- Iraqi government forces

- Coalition forces (especially post-2003)
- Non-state armed groups

Notable Incidents and Patterns:

- **Abu Ghraib Scandal:** Severe human rights violations in 2003-2004.
- **Post-ISIL Detentions:** Arbitrary arrests of those suspected of ISIL ties.
- **Prolonged Detention:** Many held for long periods without charge or trial.
- **Torture and Ill-treatment:** Widespread reports of abuse in detention facilities.

Displacement:

Number of internally displaced persons (IDPs): [Insert number]

Number of refugees: [Insert number]

Freedom of Expression:

Number of journalists detained: [Insert number]

Number of media outlets closed or censored: [Insert number]

2. Human Rights Violations by Region:

Kurdistan Region:

Statistics on reported violations: [Insert statistics]

Baghdad:

Statistics on reported violations: [Insert statistics]

Nineveh Province:

Statistics on reported violations: [Insert statistics]

3. Special Focus Areas:

Gender-Based Violence:

Number of reported cases: [Insert number]

Types of violence (e.g., domestic violence, trafficking): [Insert types]

Child Rights Violations:

Number of child soldiers recruited: [Insert number]

Number of cases of child exploitation: [Insert number]

Appendix B: Glossary of Legal and Human Rights Terms

1. Arbitrary Detention:

Definition: Detention without legal grounds or due process.

2. Displacement:

Definition: Forced movement of people from their homes due to conflict, violence, or other factors.

3. Human Rights:

Definition: Fundamental rights and freedoms entitled to every individual.

4. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):

Definition: Individuals who have been forced to flee their homes but remain within their country.

5. Freedom of Expression:

Definition: The right to express one's opinions and ideas without fear of censorship or retaliation.

6. Gender-Based Violence:

Definition: Harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender.

7. Arbitrary Arrest:

Definition: Arrests that occur without legal justification or due process.

8. Refugee:

Definition: A person who has been forced to leave their country to escape conflict or persecution.

